



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

*Office
Dist. 3/7/51*

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For PM's MARCH 6, 1951

SECRETARY CHAPMAN ISSUES 1951 ALASKA FISHING REGULATIONS

In announcing the 1951 regulations for the protection of the commercial fisheries of Alaska, Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman today declared that the new regulations contain a larger number of changes than usual because of shifting conditions in the fisheries.

As previously announced, the principal change will occur in the Bristol Bay area with the advent of power boats, which will be permitted for the first time this year. Secretary Chapman stated that the Department has been aware of the fact that the use of power boats in Bristol Bay will undoubtedly make some changes in the economic status of the area. So that the burden will not fall too heavily on the local residents, the Department has opened to set net fishing all intertidal waters outside of the drift gill net markers. At the same time it has prohibited the use of set nets above the drift gill net markers. This, in effect, permits set netting along the shores of the bays wherever drift netting is permitted. The set net regulations have been relaxed, also, to allow operation anywhere in the intertidal zones instead of confinement to a narrow strip of beach adjacent to the high tide line, as in 1950.

This year, for the first time, the Department of the Interior finds it necessary to place control on fishing for personal use. In the Cook Inlet area in the vicinity of Anchorage, and in the upper Copper River, certain streams have been closed entirely to salmon fishing, including that for local use. Only four out of the hundreds of streams in Alaska, however, have been closed. Without such protection, the salmon runs in those streams, already greatly reduced, would be completely destroyed.

Commercial fishermen in Alaska have been expressing widespread opposition to the use of the so-called "mother-ships", particularly in gill net fishing, because of the danger of overfishing. The prohibition against "mother-ship" operation, which was previously applied only to purse seining, therefore has now been extended to include all forms of mobile gear.

The 1951 regulations require a new method of rendering salmon traps inoperative during seasonal and weekly closed periods. A section of the pot wall of each trap must be opened and sealed in place during such closed seasons.

In the areas of Central Alaska, the principal changes include longer weekly closed periods in Cook Inlet, Resurrection Bay, and Yakutat. On Kodiak Island the midseason closure from July 15 to August 1 will be effective in 1951 in the Red River district as well as in the other districts in the area. The fishing season in the Karluk district will close on July 15 for the remainder of the year. In the Copper River area a summer season from July 10 to August 7 will be permitted for red salmon because of the opinion that there is a small run in that area not now being utilized.

In the Yakutat area the king salmon season has been curtailed in Dry Bay but the red salmon season has been liberalized by permitting fishing for this species to commence on June 18 instead of July 1.

In Southeastern Alaska, throughout the area, the maximum length of purse seines has been standardized at 250 fathoms, with which a lead of 75 fathoms may be used. The taking of coho salmon by any means is prohibited in the area from September 20 to July 1 of the year following. The prohibition against taking or possessing undersized king salmon, which applied throughout Alaska in 1950, will apply only in Southeastern Alaska in 1951.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, which makes and enforces the commercial fishing regulations for Alaska, reports that there was a good escapement of pink salmon in Southeastern Alaska in 1949 and all evidence indicates a good survival from that escapement. As a result, the run this year is expected to be good so that fishing will be permitted from August 6 to September 1, as compared with August 15 to September 3 last year. Fall fishing for chums from October 1 to October 6 will be experimental in nature and close watch will be maintained to see that no undue numbers of late pink salmon are taken. In addition, the new regulations will permit a limited purse seine fishery from June 16 to July 28 in the outside waters from Cape Muzon to Cape Ulitka.

To protect the herring resources, the commercial quota for 1951 has been reduced from 150,000 to 100,000 barrels. The Service reports that this reduction was necessary because the stocks of herring in Southeastern Alaska suffered a further decline in 1950 because so few young fish, which are the basis of the future fishery, appeared.

The 1951 regulations, as in previous years, are based upon investigations and recommendations made by Fish and Wildlife Service experts, testimony presented at public hearings held by the Service in the major fishing communities in Alaska and in Seattle, Wash., and information submitted in briefs by persons interested in protecting the resource.

The amended regulations will be published in codified form as soon as possible and furnished upon request to interested persons.

x x x